



Rochford District Council

Benchmarking in Overview and Scrutiny

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report on benchmarking was commissioned as part of the review of Overview and Scrutiny which is being carried out at Rochford District Council. The terms of reference were:

- To suggest an approach to benchmarking which would aid the development of best practice at Rochford
- To look at whether data exists which might allow comparisons between Rochford and similar authorities which are recognised as engaging in best practice

2. What is benchmarking?

2.1 Benchmarking is about identifying areas where improvement is needed and comparing the authority with best practice elsewhere. It involves comparing best practice in relation to:

- organisation and process
- outputs and outcomes

It is about continuously searching for improvement.

2.2 Benchmarking also involves internal monitoring: comparing the authority's own performance against a set of indicators and targets over time.

3. General position on benchmarking

Investigations undertaken

3.1 For the purposes of the study, information on the current position in regard to benchmarking was gathered from a number of sources:

- The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) database and discussions forum, seeking information from other authorities on benchmarking work being undertaken
- Information supplied by two regional Overview and Scrutiny networks, in the North West and West Midlands, both of which have undertaken some work on benchmarking
- Information from two surveys of local authorities carried out by CfPS, focusing on how they undertake Overview and Scrutiny
- Telephone and e-mail survey of fourteen authorities chosen on the following basis:
 - 10 "fourth option" authorities which were classified as Excellent or Good by the CPA process; and where

- the CPA report made positive comments about O&S. (These included one Essex authority.)
 - 2 Essex District Councils (not fourth option) which were classified as Excellent or Good by the CPA process; and where the CPA report made positive comments about O&S
 - Two District Councils (not fourth option) which have been recognised through CPA and other independent studies as having strong and effective O&S
- Information from a previous survey of 24 authorities of different types and sizes which use a variety of performance measures for their Overview and Scrutiny work.
- Review of research on good practice in Overview and Scrutiny by the ODPM's Evaluating Local Government project; CfPS; De Montfort University; and Cardiff University

Findings

3.2 From the investigation carried out, it appears that very little work is being undertaken on benchmarking Overview and Scrutiny between different authorities:

- Replies were received from eleven of the fourteen "Excellent" or "Good" authorities approached; none of the eleven was undertaking any work on benchmarking.
- The North West network have concluded that benchmarking outputs and outcomes is not feasible. Given the variations between authorities and the consequent differences in the way that Overview and Scrutiny is carried out, it was felt that comparisons would not be valid. They have, however, carried out a survey of member authorities which asked about processes and organisation of Overview and Scrutiny, in the context of best practice identified by national research studies. The network is likely to concentrate on these aspects of best practice in the future.
- The West Midlands network have also carried out a survey which focused on best practice in organisation and processes and included two output/outcome indicators: the number of policies examined by Overview and Scrutiny; and the number of alternatives presented by O&S as a result of those examinations. Information was also gathered on staffing and other budget costs. The benchmarking project has now been discontinued.
- The surveys carried out by CfPS concentrated on the organisation of Scrutiny, budgets and staffing arrangements.

However, some questions on outputs and outcomes were also included:

- Percentage of recommendations accepted and implemented
- Perceived quality of support given to Members
- Views on how good O&S is at holding decision-makers to account
- Views on whether O&S is valued within the authority
- Views on whether O&S adds value

The overall results from these survey questions provide useful points of comparison, with the following caveats: the questions are subjective and it is therefore difficult to be sure that comparisons are valid; the data are provided by a range of authorities, differing greatly in type, size and organisation.

3.3 The conclusion, therefore, is that in terms of outputs and outcomes, comparison with other authorities will be difficult, because of the lack of reliable and truly comparable data. To develop this aspect of benchmarking, it would be necessary to devise methods of collecting information which could be compared across authorities; and recruit a group of similar authorities willing to take part in benchmarking activities.

3.4 However, there is more scope for benchmarking of organisation and processes, because national research into Overview and Scrutiny has identified a number of factors which help to make O&S effective. These good practice factors could be used as a standard against which Rochford and benchmarking partners could compare themselves. Appendix 1 sets out a list of good practice elements in relation to Overview and Scrutiny, identified by research carried out by the Evaluating Local Government project, De Montfort University, Cardiff University and the CfPS. From this list, a number of core elements could be chosen to enable comparisons with other authorities in terms of organisation and process and to identify those authorities from which good practice lessons could be learned. Alternatively, the list could simply be used by Rochford itself, to benchmark its own practice against an identified standard of good practice.

4. Monitoring and evaluation within the authority

Performance monitoring

4.4 The other aspect of benchmarking is measuring performance against targets set by the authority itself, in the light of best practice; and monitoring progress against these targets.

- 4.5 Of the eleven “Excellent” and “Good” authorities which replied to the survey, only one (South Ribble) said that they monitor and evaluate the performance of Overview and Scrutiny in a systematic way, using a suite of performance indicators and setting year-on-year targets; though many produce annual reports which set out what has been achieved during the year; and Maidstone seeks the views of witnesses on the effectiveness of committee meetings. However, many other authorities have developed performance indicators for Overview and Scrutiny. For example, Tameside in particular has done a lot of work on performance indicators; and Bridgend and Lambeth have also developed suites of performance indicators. These indicators are used for monitoring and reviewing the authority’s own performance, rather than comparing with others. Performance indicators for Overview and Scrutiny have also been suggested by De Montfort University and by CfPS.
- 4.6 Based on good practice elsewhere, Appendix 2 sets out some initial suggestions for performance indicators for Overview and Scrutiny which could be used at Rochford. The performance indicators are related to a set of objectives based on the desired outcomes of the Local Government Act 2000; and on the CfPS principles of effective Scrutiny. The performance indicators are drawn from ODPM research; CfPS; and indicators in use in other authorities. These suggestions are put forward for consideration by Members and officers, as the starting point for identifying a meaningful set of performance indicators for Rochford.

Qualitative self-evaluation

- 4.7 CfPS have developed a more in-depth and qualitative tool for periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny. The “Self-evaluation Framework” poses a series of questions relating to the four principles of good scrutiny identified by CfPS:

- Provide “critical friend” challenge
- Reflect the public voice
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process
- Make an impact on service delivery

Authorities are asked to cite specific evidence to back up their judgements in relation to achieving these four principles. The Framework provides a useful means for structuring the authority’s reflection upon its own practice.

5. How Rochford compares

- 5.1 The initial aspiration was to compare Rochford's performance in Overview and Scrutiny with that of other authorities, using existing benchmarking data. However, the absence of comparable data makes this problematic. The following paragraphs set out such comparisons as are available at the present time.

Performance indicator data

- 5.2 In Rochford, as elsewhere, there is quite a lot of routine information available on the activities of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. However, much of it does not relate particularly to monitoring efficiency or effectiveness and does not lend itself to comparisons with other authorities. The percentage of recommendations accepted (see table below) is the only information which is currently readily available; lends itself to comparison with other authorities; and says something about the effectiveness of O&S. However, even here there are caveats: because the information may have been collected in different ways, it may not be truly comparable; and different structures and approaches may also undermine comparability. (For example, the fact that in Rochford Overview and Scrutiny Committees have operated almost as sub-committees of Policy Committees may have affected the proportion of recommendations which were accepted.) The range of the figures from other authorities in the CfPS survey may also be indicative of this variability in approach.

Indicator	Rochford data	Comparative data from other authorities
Percentage of O&S recommendations accepted	97% (All Committees 2002-2005)	CfPS survey 2003 - 79% (range 1% to 100%) South Ribble 2004/05- 98% Tameside 2004/05 - 100%

Conditions for "Strong" Scrutiny

- 5.3 The Evaluating Local Government project has identified three factors which indicate whether the Overview and Scrutiny function within an authority is strong or weak. These are:
- A non-partisan approach, as indicated by the fact that there are no party pre-meetings
 - Commitment to support for O&S, as indicated by the fact that there is dedicated officer or expert support available

- The vitality of O&S, as indicated by the fact that Committees explore innovative forms of service delivery
- 5.4 If two or three factors are in place, the O&S process is judged to be “Strong”; if only one, or none, is in place, O&S is judged to be “Weak”. According to these criteria, O&S at Rochford would be judged to be “Weak”. However, consideration is being given to the appointment of a support officer; and the proposed arrangements should make it easier for the new Review Committee to explore innovative approaches to service delivery through their reviews. There is the opportunity, therefore, for Rochford to move into the “Strong” category in the near future.

Good practice in organisation and process

- 5.5 National research has identified good practice in relation to the way Overview and Scrutiny is organised and carried out. Reviewing the information from these research studies, 48 organisational and process factors have been identified which contribute to the achievement of effective O&S. Fifteen of these factors are already in place at Rochford and another eleven are partly in place; Appendix 1 gives details. The checklist can be used to help consider the future approach to the work of the Review Committee, within the new structure.

6. Suggested approaches

- 6.1 Both benchmarking good practice across authorities and performance monitoring within the authority are important aspects of learning and developing effective overview and scrutiny. Benchmarking nationally is in its infancy, but many authorities are developing methods of monitoring and evaluating their own performance internally. Based on the investigations undertaken, the following approaches are suggested to both benchmarking and performance monitoring and evaluation.

Benchmarking

- 6.2 Given the challenges involved in benchmarking data on outputs and outcomes across different authorities, it is suggested that initially Rochford focuses benchmarking activity on good practice in organisation and processes. As benchmarking partnerships mature, it may be possible eventually to develop benchmarking for outputs and outcomes. As these partnerships do not currently exist, it may be necessary for Rochford to take the lead initially. The following approach is suggested:

- Identifying a group of partner authorities (see next section) and networking with them through such activities as:
 - Instigating the setting up of an Overview and Scrutiny network of Essex authorities, with regular meetings to share information and experience; this could include inviting guest speakers from other best practice authorities or acknowledged O&S experts
 - Annual surveys of partners to identify best practice in organisation and processes
 - Developing relationships with similar authorities outside Essex which are known to be engaging in good practice in O&S
 - Visits to, and discussions with, best practice partners within and outside Essex to learn from their approach; this could include observing O&S meetings and discussions with officers and Members
 - As the relationships develop, exploring the possibility with partners of establishing a core set of performance indicators which can be used to compare performance across authorities; and developing, with partners, methods of collecting, analysing and reporting data

Possible benchmarking partners

- 6.3 Overview and Scrutiny networks are frequently set up across counties or regions. Rochford is currently considering setting up networking arrangements with other Essex authorities and this has already begun with Castle Point and Basildon. The challenge with geographical networks is that, although the authorities have local issues in common, authorities will differ in size and structure, making some comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, there is a value in developing learning relationships with neighbouring authorities, as some elements of good practice do not depend on size and resources: for example, developing innovative approaches to gathering information for reviews.
- 6.4 However, there is undeniably a value in benchmarking with partners which have been independently identified as examples of good practice in some or all aspects of O&S. They do not necessarily need to be exactly comparable with Rochford in other ways, though the more similar they are, the easier it will be to compare across a range of indicators. The investigation has identified ten fourth option authorities with “Good” or “Excellent” CPA results and positive comments by CPA about O&S (these include a neighbouring Essex authority). These are:

- Alnwick
- East Dorset
- Maldon
- North Cornwall
- Penwith
- Runnymede
- Ryedale
- South Shropshire
- Wellingborough
- West Devon

6.5 In addition, four district councils have been identified which are not fourth option, but which have “Excellent” or “Good” CPA reports and are commended for O&S, two are Essex authorities. These are:

- Colchester
- Maidstone
- South Ribble
- Tendring

6.6 A looser network could be developed with these best practice authorities, through sharing of information, discussions and visits.

Performance monitoring and evaluation within Rochford

6.7 Regardless of any benchmarking with other authorities, it would be useful for Rochford to identify clearly its own objectives for Overview and Scrutiny; and to develop a set of performance indicators for outputs, outcomes and impact which the authority can use to monitor and evaluate its own O&S performance over time. These performance indicators, in due course, might become the basis for a set of benchmarking indicators shared with other authorities.

6.8 Based on best practice elsewhere, a possible set of performance indicators has been suggested in Appendix 2. These suggestions could form the basis of discussions by officers and Members, so that a core group of indicators can be identified which meet Rochford’s needs. The objectives identified are based on the intended outcomes of the Local Government Act 2000 and the four principles of effective Scrutiny identified by CfPS. The indicators focus on the outputs and outcomes of O&S; for example, the percentage of recommendations accepted and implemented; or the perceived value added by O&S.

6.9 However, the most challenging aspect to measure is the ultimate impact of O&S, that is, the effect of O&S on service delivery and local people’s lives. This is an area which authorities are only just beginning to consider. It is difficult to identify quantitative

measures for impact and those authorities which are tackling the evaluation of impact are doing it through such means as: follow-up mini-reviews which look at changes resulting from the original review. This includes seeking the views of service users and other interested parties. Amongst others, Tameside and Maidstone both carry out such follow-up reviews. A report by South Ribble Borough Council in 2004 sets out a possible approach to evaluating impact.

- 6.10 Rochford might also consider using the CfPS “Self-evaluation Framework”, which provides a useful tool for periodic in-depth examination. As more authorities use this tool and make their findings publicly available, it could help to build up a detailed database of best practice.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Benchmarking with best practice authorities and monitoring performance within the authority against standards and targets are both important ways of learning and developing. Nationally, benchmarking of scrutiny outputs and outcomes has not yet been developed to any extent; and differences between authorities have led to a lack of comparability. At this stage, therefore, it is likely to be more productive to benchmark organisation and processes across authorities: that is, to identify organisational factors which are likely to foster effective, innovative and challenging scrutiny; and to learn from those authorities which have adopted this best practice. Internal performance monitoring of overview and scrutiny, on the other hand, is being developed in a number of authorities and there are best practice examples which can be used to model the development of performance measurement at Rochford.
- 7.2 In light of the general lack of comparative information, it has been difficult to compare Rochford’s performance in Overview and Scrutiny with that of other authorities. However, comparisons have been drawn with the criteria for “Strong” scrutiny proposed by the Evaluating Local Government project; and the conditions for effective overview and scrutiny emerging from national research. Areas for improvement have emerged; and strengths which can be built upon have been identified.

8. Recommendations

That Members note the information set out in the report; and consider adopting the approach to benchmarking and performance monitoring outlined in Section 6.

References

1. Cardiff University: *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Local Scrutiny*, 2003
2. Centre for Public Scrutiny:
 - *Why Scrutiny Matters*, 2003
 - *Good Scrutiny Guide*, 2003
 - *Overview and Scrutiny Guidance for Fourth Option Councils*, 2004
 - *Self-evaluation Framework for Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government*, 2004
 - *Local Authority Scrutiny Surveys, 2003 and 2004*
 - *Scrutiny Champions' Bulletins*
3. De Montfort University and INLOGOV: *The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government*, 2002
4. Evaluating Local Government Team (Consortium of University of Manchester, Birkbeck College, Goldsmith's College, Salford University):
 - *Report of ELG Survey Findings for ODPM Advisory Group*, 2002
 - *Implementing the 2000 Act with respect to New Council Constitutions and the Ethical Framework - First Report*
5. Overview and Scrutiny documentation from the following organisations:
 - Bridgend County Borough Council: *Scrutiny Support Unit Scorecard*
 - Lambeth Borough Council: *Scrutiny Performance Indicators*
 - Maidstone Borough Council: *Overview and Scrutiny Questionnaire*
 - North West Scrutiny Officer Network: *Performance Indicators and Benchmarks: the Shape and Process of Overview and Scrutiny in the North West of England 2004/05 - Data Form A, June 2004*; *Good Practice Notes on: Developing Relationships with Service-based Colleagues; Holding the Executive to Account; Tracking Recommendations and Preparing Agendas and Minutes; Putting Review Programmes Together*
 - South Ribble Borough Council: *Making an Impact*, 2004; *Scrutiny and Improvement Plan 2004/05 - Year-end Monitoring Report*; *O&S Members Questionnaire*; *Questionnaire for Visitors to O&S Committees*; *Questionnaire for Members of the Public*
 - Tameside MBC: *Performance Matrix and Performance Indicators*
 - West Midlands Benchmarking Group: *Benchmarking of Overview and Scrutiny*

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those authorities and organisations which contributed information for this report.

Appendix 1: Good practice checklist: Rochford's performance against organisation and process indicators

Performance Indicator	Already in place? (Yes/No/Partly)	Comment
Objective 1: Greater Efficiency		
1.1 Production of annual work programme	Y	Commented on favourably by CPA, though not currently controlled by O&S
1.2 Pre-meetings held before Committee meetings, to organise the business of the meeting and agree general approach to questioning	N	In other authorities, briefing papers are often produced by Scrutiny support officers, to assist Members in interpreting information and deciding their lines of questioning. As there is as yet no Scrutiny support officer, this cannot currently be done at Rochford.
1.3 Regular reports on progress with work programme	Y	The Chief Executive provides support to the O&S Committees and produces a six-monthly progress report
1.4 Regular monitoring of corporate strategy/key priorities	P	Key priorities are monitored by Policy Committees. However, the CPA Improvement Plan is monitored by the Finance and Procedures O&S Committee.
1.5 Regular monitoring of budget; or consideration of key budget issues	P	Finance and Procedures O&S Committee considers a year end budget exception report.
Objective 2: Greater transparency		
2.1 Production of annual O&S reports	N	The lack of a Scrutiny support officer has made this difficult to achieve
2.2 Scrutiny page on web-site; and Scrutiny reports available on web-site	P	No Scrutiny page; but O&S reports available on web-site as part of the overall committee management system
2.3 Scrutiny leaflet/information pack available for public	N	Lack of a Scrutiny support officer has made this difficult to achieve
2.4 Variety of methods used to promote O&S activities to public, Members and employees, eg: regular press/media releases issued; Scrutiny newsletter; O&S items published in Members' Newsletter, employee newsletter and residents' newsletter	N	Lack of a Scrutiny support officer has made this difficult to achieve

2.5 Feedback provided to people taking part in Scrutiny reviews and discussions, eg minutes and reports	P	This has been done in the case of some specific reviews in which the public were invited to take part. However, it is not done consistently.
2.6 Surveys of non-O&S Members carried out, to ascertain level of awareness and understanding of O&S function	N	This is not seen as appropriate under the current structure, as almost all Members are on O&S Committees
2.7 O&S awareness training available for non-O&S Members and non-O&S employees	P	O&S training is generally made available to all Members. There are no O&S employees and there is no systematic O&S awareness training for employees, though there have been specific sessions for managers on particular issues
2.8 Surveys of public and partners carried out, to ascertain level of awareness and understanding of O&S function, eg through Citizens Panel or LSP	N	No general surveys carried out of public or partners. However, as part of the O&S review, a number of contractors for outsourced services were invited to discuss their views with the Committee.
Objective 3: Greater accountability		
3.1 Policy Committee Chairmen or other Members required to attend O&S to discuss progress or issues of concern	N	The Constitution sets out the requirement for Policy Committee Chairmen to come before O&S Committees when requested to do so. However, Chairmen have not been requested to attend as it is not seen as appropriate given the current structure
3.2 Senior officers required to attend O&S to discuss progress or issues of concern	Y	
3.3 Forward Plans in place for Policy Committees and Forward Plan items picked up for inclusion on O&S agenda	N	It is not seen as appropriate to introduce Forward Plans for Policy Committees. There are regular progress reports to the Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance Committee on key policies and actions in the Corporate Plan; and progress reports on relevant policies to the other Policy Committees. O&S Committees can pick up issues from these agenda and reports.
3.4 Clear and simple call-in procedures which are easy for Members to put into operation speedily, without veto by a	P	There are some positive points about the system of call-in: only three Members are required to call-in a decision. However, there is a slight

ruling group councillor or chief officer. The number of Councillors needed to call-in a decision in should be more than 1 and no more than 5. Reasons should be given for call-in, to help with the investigation process.		ambiguity in the fact that a call-in can be made to an O&S Committee or to full Council. It might be helpful if there were some clarification of the circumstances in which a call-in should be referred to an O&S Committee, rather than to full Council, so that the role of O&S is clearly defined. Clarification may be considered as part on the new structure.
3.5 Training provided for O&S Members in challenging interviewing techniques	Y	Training has been provided by IDeA, but it is intended to provide more
3.6 Pre-decision Scrutiny, that is: O&S comments on policy reports at draft stage and Policy Committee takes O&S comments into account in making their decision	N	This may be considered as part of new approach.
Objective 4: “Critical friend” relationship		
4.1 Regular meetings between O&S and Policy Committee Chairmen and /or Members to discuss O&S issues or policy issues	N	This has not been seen as appropriate under the current structure, but could now be considered
4.2 Protocols in place making clear the relationship between Policy Committees and O&S	P	These appear in the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules, as part of the Constitution. However, it is felt that a plain English version is needed, which would be readily available and would clarify the different roles and responsibilities
4.3 Regular meetings with senior officers	Y	As with other Committees, Chairmen’s briefings by officers are available for O&S Chairmen
4.4 External partners involved in providing challenge to Policy Committees, either through co-option or as advisors	N	This is planned as part of the new approach
Objective 5: Greater public involvement and responsiveness		
5.1 Public involvement in/consultation on the O&S work programme	N	The Chairman of Finance and Procedures O&S Committee, who is chairing the O&S review, is very keen on taking up issues raised by the public

5.2 Public involvement in O&S reviews, for example, surveys, submissions invited, public meetings	P	Members of the public have been involved in some reviews and invited to give evidence; for example, the Animal Welfare Charter, the market review and a public meeting with horse riders. However, this is not done consistently. There are plans for more public involvement in future.
5.3 O&S Committee meetings open to the public	Y	Not many people attend, unless they have been specifically invited to give evidence for a review
5.4 Chairman's statement at the beginning of Committee meetings, explaining the purpose of the meeting and how it will be conducted	Y	If there are members of the public or representatives of other organisations present, the Chairman generally explains the purpose of the meeting and how it will be conducted.
5.5 Information provided in advance to witnesses, explaining purpose, procedures and areas of questioning to be covered in questioning	P	People giving evidence are contacted informally to tell them about the scope of the discussion, but procedures are not discussed.
5.6 Public speaking rights at meetings	N	The public have the right to speak only at public meetings, not at Committee meetings. Among Councillors, there is some disagreement among Members as to the appropriateness of public speaking rights.
5.7 Meetings sometimes held in community venues	P	This is sometimes done, but rarely.
Objective 6: Making an impact on service delivery		
6.1 Monitoring proportion of recommendations accepted	Y	This has now begun. It is felt that because, in the past, O&S Committees have acted almost as sub-committees of Policy, their recommendations could have been more likely to be accepted and past figures may not provide a true comparison with the new approach. A new baseline will therefore need to be established.
6.2 Monitoring implementation of recommendations	Y	O&S Committees monitor progress on decisions made to policy committees, through six-monthly reports. It is felt, however, that the approach could be refined and improved.
6.3 Identifying SMART objectives and recommendations for reviews,	N	Terms of reference provide the objectives for reviews. Further work needs to be done on recommendations

which can be easily measured; and identifying appropriate indicators		and performance indicators.
6.4 Following up outcomes and impact of reviews through: mini-reviews; follow-up meetings with stakeholders to identify impact; follow-up reports	N	This kind of follow-up has not yet been discussed.
6.5 Vitality of O&S: do Committees explore innovative forms of service delivery?	N	This has not been a feature of O&S to date.
6.6 Scrutiny of external providers and partnerships undertaken	Y	A review of partnerships is underway and representatives of outside bodies have been invited to appear before O&S, for example a County Council Cabinet Member.
6.7 Use of task and finish groups, involving non-O&S Members where appropriate, to make use of Members' skills and experience; and encourage wider involvement in O&S	Y	Sub-Committees are set up to carry out some reviews.
6.8 Use of a variety of methods of gathering evidence, to reflect views and experiences of different groups	N	Public meetings are used as the main means of gathering information, with representatives of different groups specifically invited, as well as members of the public in general. However, site visits have also been carried out, eg for the market review. Different methods are likely to be considered as part of the new approach.
Objective 7: Taking the lead and owning the O&S process		
7.1 O&S Committees develop their own work programme; and all O&S Members are involved in discussions	N	The work programme tends to reflect the issues which senior officers or policy committees feel should be investigated. The Chairman of Finance and Procedures O&S Committee is keen that the new Review Committee should develop its own work programme.
7.2 Agreed criteria in place for including topics on the work programme	N	Criteria will be considered as part of the new arrangements.
7.3 Standard approach to scoping reviews	Y	

7.4 Progress on work programme monitored	Y	There are six-monthly reports on progress against the work programme.
7.5 Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of O&S carried out, eg through performance indicators or a qualitative evaluation process	N	This is being considered, as part of the work on benchmarking.
7.6 Development of joint learning arrangements with other authorities, eg through visits to learn from best practice authorities; networking to share experience; joint training	Y	This is underway: two other authorities have been invited to take part in joint training, though at the moment this does not include O&S; best practice visits are being planned; work is being carried out on the possibility of benchmarking.
7.7 Surveys of O&S Members carried out, to ascertain their enthusiasm for the O&S role; satisfaction with the process; satisfaction with support, training and information; level of understanding of O&S	N	This is being considered. (Given the small number of O&S Members under the new proposals, a focus group discussion, perhaps with an outside facilitator, may be more appropriate than a survey.)
7.8 Set of values/ principles adopted by O&S	P	A set of principles is included in the O&S procedural rules set out in the Constitution. However, it would be clearer if these principles were also "badged up" as a separate plain English document, which would draw attention to the way O&S operates.
7.9 Non-partisan approach: no political group meetings before O&S Committees; no "whipping"	Y	These principles are set out in the Constitution. Although initially there were political group meetings before O&S and the party whip was applied, this no longer happens.
7.10 Dedicated officer support available to O&S	N	Proposed for inclusion in current budget discussions

Appendix 2: Possible Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Source of data
Objective 1: Greater efficiency	
1.1 Completion of O&S work programme on time	Six-monthly review
1.2 Number of occasions when O&S comments/recommendations on corporate performance are acted upon	Six-monthly report to Review Committee
Objective 2: Greater transparency	
2.1 Whether sufficient information was provided to witnesses about the O&S process	Brief survey form issued to witnesses following meetings
2.2 Number of articles in the local press relating to O&S	Six-monthly survey of press coverage
Objective 3: Greater accountability	
3.1 Percentage of Policy Committee items amended as a result of Review Committee intervention	Six-monthly review
Objective 4: "Critical friend" relationship	
4.1 Views of policy committee chairmen and members as to whether O&S adds value; and what improvements could be made to the relationship	Brief survey forms issued following attendance at meetings; or annual survey
Objective 5: Greater public involvement and responsiveness	
5.1 Percentage of items on the work programme suggested by the public or included in response to issues raised through surveys, comments or complaints	Annual review
5.2 Views of public on aspects of meetings: accessibility of venue; ability to see, hear and follow the proceedings; interest and relevance of topics; clarity of reports; sufficient opportunity for public to take part	Brief survey form available to all members of the public who attend meetings
5.3 Percentage of public who feel they have an awareness and understanding of O&S	Question included annually on Citizens' Panel survey or other annual public survey
Objective 6: Making an impact on service delivery	
6.2 Witnesses' views of value added by O&S meetings	Brief survey form issued to witnesses following meetings
6.2 Percentage of O&S recommendations accepted	Six monthly monitoring
6.3 Percentage of O&S recommendations implemented	Six monthly monitoring

Objective 7: Taking the lead and owning the O&S process	
7.1 Meetings attended by Scrutiny Members, as a percentage of those which they were required to attend	Six monthly monitoring of attendance
7.2 Proportion of Members who are enthusiastic about their role in O&S	Annual survey or focus group
7.3 Extent to which witnesses and public feel that O&S Committee met their stated values or aims	Brief survey form issued to witnesses and public following meetings
7.4 O&S Members' satisfaction with the quality of information they receive	Annual survey or focus group
7.5 O&S Members' satisfaction that the training they receive meets their needs	Annual survey or focus group